

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

A REPORT FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

IN

PURSUANCE OF A RESOLUTION

OF THE

SENATE OF THE NINETEENTH OF JANUARY, 1818,

WITH

THE LETTERS, &c. REFERRED TO IN IT.

FEBRUARY 13, 1818.

Printed by order of the Senate of the United States.

WASHINGTON:

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1818.

To the Senate of the United States:

In compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 19th of January, 1818, requesting information of the measures which have been taken, in pursuance of so much of the act to authorize the appointment of a surveyor for the lands in the northern part of the Mississippi territory, passed the 3d of March, 1817, as relates to the reservation of certain sections, for the purpose of laying out and establishing towns thereon, I now transmit a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, which, with the letters and charts referred to in it, contains all the information which is desired.

JAMES MONROE.

Washington, February 23d, 1818.

In obedience to a resolution of the Senate, requesting the President of the United States to inform the Senate what measures have been taken in pursuance of so much of the act, entitled "An act to authorize the appointment of a surveyor for the lands in the northern part of the Mississippi territory, and the sale of certain lands therein described," passed the third day of March, one thousand eight hundred and seventeen, as relates to the reservation of certain sections for the purpose of laying out and establishing towns thereon,

The Secretary of the Treasury respectfully reports to the President of the United States, the enclosed letters and charts, explanatory of the measures which have been adopted within the contemplation of the resolution.

All which are respectfully submitted.

WM. H. CRAWFORD.

Treasury Department,
19th February, 1818.

*Treasury Department,**6th June, 1817.*

SIR,

To enable the President of the United States to make a proper selection of the sections authorized to be reserved for the purpose of laying out and establishing towns, under the act for appointing a surveyor of the lands in the northern parts of the Mississippi territory, I have the honor to request that you will instruct the surveyor of the said district, to furnish all the information necessary for that object.

In performing this duty, his attention will necessarily be directed to the Falls of the Sepsy or Black Warrior, to the Cotton-gin port on the Tombigby, and to the junction of those two rivers, should it be comprised within his land district. Two points upon the Tennessee river will probably be found to unite in their favor considerations sufficiently strong to become the objects of selection under the act in question. One of these will probably be found at or near the foot of the Muscle Shoals, or some point at the head of boat navigation or Bear Creek, as the one or the other may be nearest to the navigable waters of the Tombigby river, which is understood to be the Cotton-gin port. The other, above the Muscle Shoals, at the nearest point from the Falls of the Sepsy. These two towns will probably be great thorough fairs between East and West Tennessee, and the towns which will no doubt be built at the falls of those navigable rivers.

As soon as the information necessary to a selection shall be received, the reservations will be decided upon, and instructions given for laying out the town upon such plan as shall be approved by the President.

Although the act of the 3d March last does not apply to the Alabama district, it is deemed proper to make reservations there also, for the purpose of laying off and establishing towns when authority shall be given for that purpose: you are therefore requested to cause the information necessary for the making of such selections, to be obtained as soon as practicable by the surveyor of that district, and transmitted, without delay, to this Department.

The Falls of the Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Cabawba rivers, and the junction of the latter river with the Alabama, are the points to which his attention will necessarily be directed. It is extremely desirable that this information should be obtained in time to make

such reservations at the sale to be held at Milledgeville on the first Monday in August, as the public interest shall require.

I am very respectfully,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed)

WM. H. CRAWFORD,

Josiah Meigs, Esquire,

Commissioner of the General Land Office.

Huntsville, M. T. 2d August, 1817.

SIR,

Agreeably to former advice, I now transmit you plats to such sections, as I think best calculated for laying out towns on the Tennessee River. Below the Shoals no doubt, will be erected a town, that will grow into much importance; but to determine on the most suitable spot is somewhat difficult, as several sites present themselves, either of which will do tolerably well, but none possess all the advantages that could be wished for. The first is the south bank of Tennessee River, opposite the mouth of Cypress, the place where the military road that is now opening, will cross that river. The situation is high and somewhat broken; the bank of the river is an abrupt precipice of limestone rock, about 180 feet high; through this bluff is a hollow leading into the river; where runs a small spring, only sufficient for the use of a small family; along this hollow the road has been made with some labor to the water's edge, where the landing is good for a ferry, but rather limited for the purposes of a town, particularly for carriages hauling cargoes to and from boats. From the top of the bluff, the land descends as it leaves the river, and is waving with several hollows and sinks—has every appearance of as much health as any other place on the river; the Cold Water Spring, equal to any fountain in the world, lies three miles south of this place, and is sufficiently large for a set of mills on a large scale. Water from this spring, if it could be thrown 100 feet high, would flow to the spot; but of this I am not a judge, if it would be practicable. See the plat.

At and below the mouth of Cold Water Creek, is a good situation; the bank of the river is a bluff of limestone rock, about 110 feet high, running back from the river tolerably level, but descends both up and down the river; at the lower end of the bluff is a level bottom about twenty poles wide, extending down the river near a mile—a fine boat-landing the whole way, the bank level and dry. Above the bluff, the ground descends into a point between the river and creek, and forms a good boat-landing on the river, or at any point up the creek for half a mile, as the water in the mouth of the creek is always sufficiently deep for boats that distance, forming a most beautiful bank and back ground for wagons and such carriages, as would be used in transporting cargoes to and from boats. This point of land is the spot that general Robertson destroyed a Creek village, in the year 1787. The ascent from either landing to the top of the hill, is easy. About half a mile back from the river, is a fine bold spring of pure limestone water, that discharges itself into the Cold Water Creek. The water from the cold water spring could be carried to this place, by throwing it twenty or thirty feet, by pursuing the creek bottom.

This situation is opposite the centre of an island, that is about five miles long, which would oppose a ferry being there. See the plat.

Neither of those sites are precisely at the head of navigation. About three miles above the mouth of Cypress, on the south side of Tennessee River, is a remarkably fine large spring, affording plenty of water for the purposes of a town. This spring rises about eighty poles from the river, and runs nearly due north, with a fine current, into the river. On each side of the branch, the ground is very broken with high hills and deep hollows; the banks of the river above and below is high and very uneven, forming several elegant sites for single buildings, but none suitable for a town. At the head and to the east of the spring, the ground is high, and lies well for a town—sufficiently level, and extending back to a great distance; opposite this situation is an island, up the Muscle Shoals, of about six miles in length, the lower end of which is at Montgomery's Ferry; one mile below this spring, which is the nearest place a ferry can be had, the road to which will be excellent, as there is a broad gravelly hollow leading directly from the site to the ferry. See the plat.

Above the Muscle Shoals, it will be difficult to determine the place that is to grow into the most importance, as much will depend upon the local situation of the subdivisions of the country by the legislature, as each county on the river will no doubt lay out a town to suit the convenience of the inhabitants, and which may very possibly be different from the ones I may select at present; but having my attention directed to a site most contiguous to the head navigation of the Black Warrior River, I will give you two points, the best in my opinion to that object.

Milton's Bluff is situate on the south side of Tennessee River, and what is generally called the head of the Muscle Shoals, (yet I do not consider it as such, as I marched a brigade of mounted men to the lower county, in October, 1814, I ordered a boat load of corn to descend the river from Madison County, and meet me at Milton's Bluff, the boat grounded, and I had to send men and drag her to shore, and unload six miles above the bluff). The situation is a beautiful one; the bluff is seventy-five feet high; it is broken with a hollow through the bluff, in which, and near the margin of the river, is an excellent spring of water. There are several other small springs in the vicinity, and which would be in the bounds of a large town. The ground back from the bluff rises gradually for about fifty poles, after which it is broken with several hollows. The river here is 260 poles wide, and during the summer season when the waters are low, it is forded both above and below the bluff, with safety on a small horse. The country back for about three miles is poor, after which it becomes better, and when five or six miles back, is very good land. The inhabitants of this beautiful spot, is at this time very sickly.

The Creek village, so called, from a body of Creek Indians being there settled in a town, at the commencement of the late war. This place is about fifteen miles above Milton's Bluff; is a beautiful

situation. The bank of the river is perfectly strait and level on its top; is about fifty feet high. Except a small port below, it can be descended to the margin of the river with ease, at any place. About midway the bank is an excellent spring of pure limestone water; it breaks out near the edge of the river, and, when the waters are low, runs very bold. From the top of the bank, the ground is level back, for about fifty poles, when it descends very gently. The whole country back and around this place, lies well, and is interspersed with good land. A ferry is now kept at this place.

The falls of the Black Warrior, lies, it is believed, a little west of south from Milton's Bluff. From the plats you will observe that the Creek village is about nine miles south of Milton's Bluff, which will throw the two places nearly at equal distance from the falls. Several men have spent some time in examining the country between the Tennessee river and the falls of the Black Warrior, for the most suitable grounds to a road between those waters. The best opinion I can get on that subject, are in favor of the Creek village, from which place a road would take the dividing ridge between the heads of Bear Creek and Black Warrior, whereas from Milton's Bluff it would cross the head branches of Bear Creek, to go a strait course; but no doubt it is practicable to get a road from either place. From Huntsville to the falls of the Black Warrior, the best and most convenient route will be, to cross at the Creek village; it will also be the most direct route from New Orleans to Lexington, Kentucky.

I do not know if the President will feel authorized to lay out towns on fractional sections, but for his information, I transmit plats of the several sites, with their numbers, as they are surveyed in general with the other lands of the country.

I have the honor to be,

With great respect,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed)

JOHN COFFEE.

Josiah Meigs, Esq.

Commissioner of the General Land Office.

